

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

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FM AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9898

C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTIAGO 4992

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: CI, PGOV, PINT

SUBJECT: WHAT'S WITH THE CONTROLLER?

1. LACONIC PUBLIC STATEMENT ISSUED BY OFFICE OF CONTROLLER GENERAL
AUG 12 ANNOUNCED IMMINENT RETIREMENT OF CONTROLLER GENERAL HECTOR
HUMERES MAGNAN. EQUALLY LACONIC STATEMENT FROM SAME SOURCE AUG
19 ANNOUNCED THAT, AFTER MEETING WITH CHIEF OF STATE PINOCHET, HUMERES

HAD DECIDED TO WITHDRAW RETIREMENT PAPERS AND STAY ON.

2. RUMORS ARE FLYING AS TO CAUSE OF THIS PECULIAR MINUET. TO DATE,
WE HAVE HEARD THREE VERSIONS FROM SUPPOSEDLY WELL INFORMED
SOURCES: (1) HUMERES WAS ABOUT TO PUBLISH STUDY SHOWING MILITARY
ARE NOW ABSORBING "FORTY PER CENT" OF GOVT. BUDGET; (2) HUMERES
HAD PURSUED CHARGES AGAINST ONE MILITARY OFFICER HOLDING GOVT. POST,
WITHOUT COORDINATION WITH JUNTA AND (3) HUMERES REFUSED TO PURGE
LEFTIST ELEMENTS FROM CONTROLERIA. UNDOUBTEDLY OTHER VERSIONS WILL
ALSO MAKE THE ROUNDS.

3. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH IDEOLOGICALLY AKIN TO PRESENT GOVERNMENT,
HUMERES IS A MAN OF INTEGRITY WHO HEADS AN ORGANIZATION,
OFTEN CALLED THE "FOURTH BRANCH OF GOVERNMENT", WHOSE
AUTONOMY HAS REPEATEDLY BEEN REAFFIRMED BY JUNTA. APPARENTLY
SOME UNTOWARD INCIDENT BETWEEN EXECUTIVE BRANCH AND HUMERES
DID OCCUR AND, REFUSING TO YIELD ON WHAT HE MUST HAVE FELT TO
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BE A QUESTION OF PRINCIPLE, HE OFFERED OR WAS ASKED TO RETIRE

(HE IS 59). APPARENTLY PINOCHET HAD SECOND THOUGHTS ABOUT
POLITICAL COST OF HUMERES' PRECIPITATE RETIREMENT, ESPECIALLY
SINCE HUMERES' ANTI-ALLENDE CREDENTIALS ARE IMPECCABLE. IT
APPEARS THAT HUMERES HAS SUCCESSFULLY FOUGHT OFF STRONG
THREAT TO INDEPENDENCE OF CONTROLERIA, AT LEAST TEMPORARILY,
ALTHOUGH INCIDENT MAY WELL HAVE LEFT SOME SCARS. USUALLY
WELL-INFORMED SOURCE TOLD EMBOFF THAT CANDIDATES UNDER CONSIDER-
ATION TO REPLACE HUMERES BEFORE HE DECIDED STAY ON WERE ALL
MEN OF INTEGRITY AND INDEPENDENT JUDGEMENT.
POPPER

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